



# THE NATION Vote

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE U. S.

1026 17TH STREET, N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

## 83rd Congress Gets Under Way



### Party Organization

THE Founding Fathers who blue-printed our Congress in the Constitution did not plan for political parties. Nevertheless, the smooth functioning of today's Congress depends upon a sort of government-within-a-government organized by the two parties.

In each House the majority party takes control at the beginning of a session, electing all the officers. Leaders of the majority will schedule and guide the course of legislation. In cooperation with the President they will present a legislative program.

The Republicans control the 83rd Congress by a precarious margin. They hold 48 seats in the Senate, to the Democrats' 47. One Independent voted with the Republicans on organization. In the House, where 218 votes constitute a majority, Republicans number 221, Democrats 211, with one Independent and two vacancies accounting for the authorized membership of 435.

The day before this Congress convened, Republicans and Democrats in both House and Senate met in party caucuses to perfect their internal organization. Each chose:

(a) *A slate of officers.* In the Senate this slate listed candidates for President Pro-tempore, who presides when the Vice-president is absent; a Secretary of the Senate and a Sergeant at Arms. These last two are not Senators. In the House the slate was composed of a candidate for Speaker and a list of staff members, headed by a Clerk.

(b) *Party floor leaders.* Their duty will be to guide legislation through the law-making process. In this Congress, the position of Senate Republican floor leader will be the most important in that body. In the House the Speaker holds much the same power over the legislative process. The majority floor leader is subordinate to him. The defeated candidate for Speaker becomes the minority floor leader.

(c) *Party whips.* These are assistant floor leaders who try to hold party members in line and round them up to answer roll call at the time of a vote.

(d) *A Steering Committee.* This group determines scheduling and party strategy on bills. Senate Democrats and House and Senate Republicans now

combine this committee with the Policy Committees.

(e) *A Committee on Committees.* This places party members on standing committees.

The Republican caucuses also set up patronage committees to advise on the distribution of jobs.

### Function of Rules Committee

In addition to the party's own arrangements for handling legislation, a regular standing committee of the House has almost absolute control over the progress of legislation. Since limitations were adopted on the power of the Speaker, the Rules Committee has acquired power through the years to decide which bills shall have the right to consideration on the floor and in what order. By the kind of "rule" it adopts in each particular case the Rules Committee can restrict debate on a controversial measure or limit the opportunity to amend it. It can expedite or retard any measure before the House. If a majority (7) of its members refuse to report a bill to the House, only a discharge petition signed by 218 members can bring it to the floor. During the 81st Congress the power of the Rules Committee was limited but in the 82nd it was restored.

When the House was about to adopt the rules under which it will operate in the 83rd Congress, a minority member tried to liberalize the rule about discharging bills from the Rules Committee. The Chairman of that Committee refused to yield the floor and the Speaker ruled in his favor. So the rules which prevailed in the 82nd Congress were adopted in toto.

### Sources of Legislation

The legislative program of the 83rd Congress will come from two sources: The Administration, which presents its program in three major Presidential messages (Budget, State of the Union, and Economic Report) and sundry minor ones; and from Congress itself. In addition to the messages outlining general policies, the Executive Branch will prepare specific bills to be introduced by Republican members. Individual members of either party and Congressional committees will also propose legislation.

The President, who is elected by the country as a whole, will attempt to take an overall view of the nation's needs and to present a coherent legislative program to meet these needs. Members of Congress, representing hundreds of districts and 48 states, often have a more limited outlook and many of their

bills will represent rather specialized interests. This is characteristic of any Congress regardless of the party in power. The President and Congress respond to somewhat different forces and few Presidents succeed, except in dire emergencies, in persuading Congress to enact all of a legislative program.

Another result of the fact that Congress and the President are often of quite different views (even when they are of the same party) is that major changes in national policy may be brought about by bills which originate in the Congress and are unrelated to or directly contrary to the party's national platform, or the President's plans. In recent years, the Taft-Hartley law, the McCarran Immigration law, and the Smith Anti-subversive law were all initiated in the Congress and passed over a Presidential veto.

A new President can usually expect a brief honeymoon with Congress. After that, though his program will be given careful consideration, the historic struggle between Congress and the Executive is likely to re-assert itself. The reasons for this struggle are embedded in our Constitutional separation of powers and in the local basis of political party organization in this country. In times of crisis the practice has generally been for the President to exercise a good deal of power. Congress often objects to being relegated to a back seat but so far has not improved its own machinery to make a larger role possible.

Students of Congress agree that if it is to take its proper and important place in the making of laws and the formulation of public policy, its 18th century structure needs considerably more overhauling. A beginning was made by the LaFollette-Monroney Reorganization Act of 1946, but much remains to be done.\*

### Legislative Process

A legislative bill in the Congress follows a clearly defined course. Whether drawn up by some department of the Executive branch, by an outside group or a member of Congress, it must be introduced by a member. It is immediately numbered, printed, and referred to a committee charged with dealing with the subject matter it contains. If the committee feels the bill is worth considering, it is studied by the professional staff. Hearings may be held, usually open to the public, at which time persons concerned may be invited, or may ask to be heard. These hearings are often printed. The committee staff prepares a report, summarizing the judgment of committee members, which is printed and submitted to the full Senate or House, along with the bill. In the House the Rules Committee must grant a rule which must be voted on by the House before the bill itself can be considered on the floor. Changes in the committee version may be made by amendments at this time. If the bill is passed by one house, it is then sent to the other body to go through the same process. If it is amended or the language changed in any way, the two versions are then turned over to a conference committee composed of members of the House and Senate committees which handled the bill. The members of this committee try to compromise differences and then report to each body. If its recommendations are accepted in both Houses, the bill, now called an Act, is signed by the Vice-president and the Speaker of the House and sent to the President. If he signs,

the measure becomes law. He may veto it, however, returning it with a message stating his objections. A veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote in both Houses, in which case it becomes law without his signature. (See also Pocket-Veto in Glossary).

### Glossary of Congressional Terms

**Caucus or Party Conference**—Political group of either party in each house organized to select party leaders and set party policies on legislation.

**Bill**—Legislative proposal before Congress, designated H. R. (House of Representatives) or S. (Senate) for chamber in which it originates and numbered in order of introduction.

**Act**—Bill passed by either house and sent to the other for consideration.

**Calendar**—An agenda or list of pending business before each house.

**Authorization Bill**—Specifies scope of a legislative program, frequently including administration and ceiling on expenditures.

**Appropriation Bill**—Provides actual funds (not necessarily the full amount authorized) to carry out activities previously authorized.

**Hearings**—Meetings held by committee to which bill is referred, so that persons interested in proposed legislation may have an opportunity to present views. Hearings are usually open to the public.

**Report**—Document summing up of committee findings on a bill and explaining committee action. Process is called "reporting".

**Cloture**—Process of limiting debate in the Senate. Requires signatures of 16 Senators for introduction, 64 (two-thirds of membership) votes for passage.

**Filibuster**—Attempt by small group to prevent action on a bill by refusing to yield the floor.

**Immunity**—Privilege of Congressmen to make statements on floor and in committee for which they cannot be sued for slander or libel.

**Vote**—4 kinds of votes are taken in Congress: *Voice*—(most used); *Division*—a standing vote; *Teller* (used in House)—total yeas and nays recorded; *Roll Call* (least used)—record of individual vote.

**Amendment**—Proposal to alter language or content of a bill or act.

**Rider**—Extraneous provision tacked onto a bill as an amendment.

**Pairs**—Device by which, in theory, a supporter and opponent of a measure who expect to be absent when vote is taken may pledge each other not to vote. Pairs are recorded but not counted.

**Conference**—Meeting between appointed representatives of two houses to iron out differences in provision of an act passed by both. The representatives are members of the committees which handled the legislation.

**Veto**—The President's refusal to sign an Act passed by Congress. President's veto may be overridden by a two-third vote of both houses. A measure becomes law with or without the President's signature unless he vetoes and returns it to Congress within 10 days.

**Pocket Veto**—If President withholds his approval of an act (does not sign) and Congress adjourns during the 10-day period, the Act does not become law.

\* See for example: James M. Burns, *Congress on Trial*, N.Y., Harper, 1949.  
Schattschneider, E. E., *Party Government*, N. Y., Farrar and Rinehart, 1942.  
"The Operation of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946" by George B. Galloway in the March 1951 *American Political Science Review*.  
Publications of the National Committee for Strengthening the Congress, 1135 Tower Building, Washington 5, D. C.

# ***U. N. General Assembly: Seventh Session***

**T**HE first half of the General Assembly's Seventh Session ended December 22, 1952 and delegates are now preparing for the second half which will convene not later than February 24. Political issues facing the U.N. have made the session so far a stormy one. The three hottest debates concerned the Korean conflict, Tunisian independence and racial discrimination in the Union of South Africa.

## **Korean Truce**

Ostensibly, the repatriation of war prisoners is the only obstacle to peace in Korea. The U. S. position is that prisoners who do not wish to go home should not be forced to do so. The Communists contend that all prisoners should be repatriated, forcibly if necessary. Since the military negotiators at Panmunjom have been deadlocked on this issue, the U. S. and the other 15 nations fighting in the U.N. Command decided to transfer the repatriation question to the General Assembly.

India, playing its customary Assembly role as mediator, proposed a resolution which eventually won the support of all nations except Nationalist China and the Soviet bloc. The Indian proposal accepts the principle that force should not be used against prisoners to prevent or effect their return to their homeland. It would establish a four-nation Repatriation Commission, consisting of Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Poland, to supervise the repatriation of prisoners. If these four nations could not agree, the deciding vote would be made by an umpire to be appointed by them. If all prisoners were not repatriated 90 days after an armistice, those remaining would be referred to the Political Conference which is to be held according to the presently agreed upon armistice terms. Prisoners still remaining thirty days later would be placed under the authority of the U.N. itself.

The U.S.S.R., and subsequently the North Korean and Chinese Communists, rejected the proposal because it recognized the principle of voluntary repatriation. However, many observers believe that although the Soviet rejection was a bitter disappointment, it did enable the U. S. to win an important battle in the cold war. For the first time the Western and Asian nations were solidly united in a proposal to end the war and for the first time many otherwise neutral nations in Asia showed disapproval of the U.S.S.R.'s unwillingness to cooperate in ending the war.

## **Tunisian Independence**

The unity of the free world did not carry over to the issue of independence for the French colonies, Tunisia and Morocco, when it came before the Assembly. For over a year, the Tunisians and Moroccans have been clamoring for sovereignty. Considerable blood has been shed and reform measures proposed by France do not satisfy the ardent nationalists who have the support of fellow Moslems. When the Assembly voted to consider the question of Tunisia and Morocco, the French delegation adopted the Soviet practice of walking out and refused to attend the discussions on the ground that this was an internal matter with which the U.N. had no authority to deal.

The Arab and Asian nations lobbied hard to persuade two-thirds of the Assembly to accept their resolution calling on the French to negotiate with the "true

representatives of the Tunisian people" for self-government, but the proposal lost. The Assembly did accept a Latin American sponsored compromise which called on the two parties to resume negotiations without designating who should represent Tunisia. A similar resolution on Morocco also passed the Assembly.

Throughout this debate the U. S. was on the horns of a serious dilemma. On the one hand the whole NATO structure rests on Franco-American cooperation. We did not want to alienate the French. Neither, on the other hand, did we have any desire to infuriate the Arab-Asian bloc. The result was that while we voted to have the issue discussed we also voted against the Arab-Asian resolution.

## **Discrimination in South Africa**

The problem of race segregation in the Union of South Africa has been brought by the Indian Government to each Assembly since 1946. India has some 350,000 nationals in South Africa who are affected by that government's policy of separating white and colored people. Like France in the Tunisian case, South Africa holds that the U.N. has no jurisdiction over its racial policies. Arab and Asian nations disagree and claim that continued racial strife in this area threatens world peace. These nations called for a commission to investigate the problem and also requested South Africa to suspend its law legalizing segregation.

The U. S. position fell between the South African and Asian viewpoints. The U. S. delegate thought the U.N. did have the authority to discuss the issue but he also reminded other delegates that the U.N. could not force social change on a government; it could only urge and persuade. It was more effective in the long run, according to the U. S., to allow the force of world opinion to make South Africa realize that it should direct its policy more in accordance with the U.N. Charter and its articles on fundamental freedoms and human rights. The final decision of the Assembly provided for a three-man Good Offices Committee and a commission to look further into the problem.

## **Finances**

The General Assembly approved a budget for 1953 of \$48,327,000 about one-half a million less than the Secretary General had requested. The amount of money to be spent by the U.N. was not nearly so controversial an issue as the rate of assessment of member nations to provide the funds. Although no nation has ever refused to pay its quota, the U. S. and the U.S.S.R. object to their assessments. The U. S. has been asked to pay 35.12 per cent, a reduction of 1.8 per cent from 1952. Senator Wiley (Rep. Wis.), representing the U. S., said the U. S. Congress was opposed to any one nation paying more than one-third of the total budget. Many believe that Congress will be reluctant to appropriate the amount requested by the U.N.; but others see less difficulty because Congress, when it asked the U.N. to lower the U. S. contribution to one-third, said this was to go into effect in 1954. The Assembly accepted this position when it approved a Canadian resolution that beginning January 1, 1954 no nation will pay more than one-third of the budget.

## Mrs. Riefler Reports . . . . .

ON December 9, I left Germany—where I had travelled for a month as a guest of the German government—immensely stimulated and rather weary, wishing that many League members could have shared the experience in which I tried to be their eyes and ears. Six women, selected from different American Women's organizations (one German newspaper referred to us as "six American presidents") travelled together, following a program which was laid out in black and white from beginning to end, from breakfast to bedtime, and which nearly always clicked.

Two purposes of the undertaking were manifest in the program: first, to give us a pleasant and interesting time in gratitude to the American people and government—thus we were wined and dined by mayors, German-American Clubs and groups of various kinds, taken to the opera, guided through the charming streets and museums of Nurnberg, driven about the beautiful Alpine country around Berchtesgaden etc. Second, to give us a firsthand view of some of the problems of the new Germany—we met and talked with refugees from east Germany, visited refugee camps, observed the effects of war bombing and astonishing amount of reconstruction, the industrial activity in the Ruhr; we felt and saw the "cold war" in Berlin; we listened to discussions of the refugee and housing problems, proposals for giving workers a share in the management of industry, analyses of the family law which is intended to give women equality with men before the law, descriptions of efforts made by women's organizations to interest women and young people in political affairs.

The LWV is a name to conjure with in these groups. I wish that you could have heard a young woman, who had been on the exchange program in the U. S., describe to a group of women leaders in Munich how members of the League of Montgomery County (Md.) testified at a county budget hearing one evening last summer. "It was 90 degrees," she said, "but there was a big crowd just the same and they all listened attentively to the League representatives because they knew the facts."

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## Excerpts . . . . .

from letters received in response to "Food For Thought on International Trade," (VOTER 1/1/53)

From Amherst, Mass.—"Congratulations on your succinct issue on international trade. . . . I would add a paragraph. . . . Many citizens, particularly certain members of Congress, have become quite agitated when foreign countries have traded with Russia. . . . Through our high tariffs, we prevent . . . our allies from trading with us. They obviously must sell their goods in order to exist. . . . When we force our allies to trade with communist nations . . . we are aiding communism."

From Snyder, New York—"The Jan. 1 VOTER is an excellent start for the new year. . . . I would like to state the angle to the taxpayer in different terms. . . . We are not apt to recognize that tariffs are also costly to the taxpayer, who pays for them not in taxes, but in high prices. Most taxpayers object to direct subsidies, knowing that they raise taxes. But a tariff is a subsidy. It allows the protected industry to charge higher prices than would otherwise be possible, and we pay for this assistance just as surely as we pay for direct subsidies. . . ."

## What Comes After ☒ ?

ON November 4, 61 million Americans expressed their political wishes by voting. To many, this was the "be-all and the end-all" of their part in politics. To others, it was just the first step in the connection between "the representative" and "the represented."

To highlight the importance of this connection and to help individuals learn more about how to make their political decisions count, the League has scheduled 17 regional Conferences on Political Effectiveness. The conferences will also evaluate the effectiveness of the League itself, in the light of recent experience.

Every League member is invited and urged to attend one of these conferences. Your President has a copy of the agenda and the name and address of the Conference Chairman.

The dates and places are:

March 4-5—Richmond, Virginia; Atlanta, Georgia  
March 11-12—Newark, New Jersey  
March 12-13—Los Angeles, California  
March 16-17—San Francisco, California; Spokane, Washington  
March 17-18—Albuquerque, New Mexico; Kansas City, Missouri  
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